D. S. Miller

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

PASTORAL AID ASSOCIATION

OF

CHRIST CHURCH,

Germantown, Philadelphia.

PRESENTED FEBRUARY 9, 1862.

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE ASSOCIATION.

PHILADELPHIA:
HENRY B. ASHMEAD, BOOK AND JOB PRINTER,
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My Dear Parishioners:

I cannot permit the publication of the First Annual Report of the Pastoral Aid Association of our Church, without especially commending it to your careful and prayerful perusal. I feel that its heart-stirring words and facts must, under God, quicken you to good works; must induce you to ask yourselves, What can I do for the salvation of souls, for the glory of my Lord? What hinders me from becoming at once an active member of this association?

The Lord has indeed smiled upon the Society during this, the first year of its existence, and as I review its works of philanthropy and of love, and think of the very efficient aid it has rendered me in my pastoral office, my gratitude is called forth and I am constrained to say, *What hath God wrought?*

There is, however, much land yet to be possessed. Souls are perishing in our midst for lack of gospel knowledge. Only let more pious fellow-workers "haste to the rescue," and sure am I that a glorious harvest will be in-gathered to everlasting life. "*What thou doest, do quickly,*" *for soon* "*the night cometh when no man can work.*"

Your affectionate friend and pastor,

A. B. ATKINS.

Parsonage, February 19, 1862.

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT.

The Pastoral Aid Association of Christ Church, Germantown, is called to-night to observe its first anniversary; to review the past and to prepare for the future.

The idea of mutual Christian support, upon which this and similar societies are founded, is as old as our religion. God, as the Creator of the world, linked together all mankind in one chain of reciprocal dependence and obligation; and God in Christ, as the Founder of the Church, lovingly laid upon His followers as a duty, only that which was in reality a necessity of their nature, when He taught them to "bear one another's burdens." Accordingly we find no fact more prominent in the history of the early church than the cooperation of all its members in appropriate service for God, for the world and for each other.

The formation of Pastoral Aid Societies is no new thing, for it dates as far back in ecclesiastical history as The Acts of the Apostles. In the sixth chapter of that book is given an account of the appointment of the first deacons; and, as we learn both from sacred and profane writings, the scope of this early association being afterwards greatly extended, many of the earnest members of the church became officially recognized, in various capacities, as co-workers with the twelve Apostles. Women as well as men were thus honored, for it is well known that down to the fifth century there existed, among other offices, that of "deaconess," under which pious women were commissioned to visit and take care of the sick, to instruct gospel learners, and to perform other appropriate functions in the church.

We cannot be too earnestly impressed with the truth that, at that early period, it does not appear to have been considered as even possible that any real disciple could deliberately make choice of a life of spiritual inactivity. The universality of just that kind of effort which now a days is exerted by comparatively few, is strongly expressed in a passage from Eusebius, written in the fourth century. "The greater number of the disciples," he tells us, "whose souls were inflamed with the divine word, fulfilled first the command of their Saviour to distribute their goods among the poor, and then traveled into distant parts and discharged the office of evangelists among those who had not heard anything of the word of Faith. They were busily employed in preaching Christ and in distributing the books of the holy gospels." Remember, this is spoken of "the greater number of the disciples."

Thus was introduced that beneficent operation of the Gospel system which, in an age of exclusiveness, brought to light the cheering truth that no class of God's people was to be debarred from the high duty and privilege of appropriately helping forward the regeneration of mankind. And,—most significant fact in the development of God's plan for the world's enlightenment,—woman, who had been the heathen's universal slave, or toy, was now lifted out of her humiliation and made to share the honors of ambassadorship for God. To use the better words of inspiration, henceforth there was to be "neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female; for all were one in Christ Jesus."

When a person is received into any association of talent and honor in the world, it is a common thing for him to recount with pride the distinguished names in the past with which his own by co-membership is linked. I cannot help thinking that the faithful members of this Society may, with a noble and holy gratification, claim humble fellowship with their predecessors

among the early saints. Look over the ancient Roll of Active Membership in this fraternity, and what honorable names do we find! Here are the devout Ananias and Cornelius; here the hospitable Gaius, and the humble, laborious Onesimus; then follows Phebe, "our sister, which is a deaconess of the church;" and that model couple, Priscilla and Aquila, who "expounded" to new disciples "the way of God more perfectly." Here is Lydia, who comforted suffering apostles; and Dorcas, too, "full of good works and alms deeds;" and "the beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord." Consider, friends, how poor are the most coveted distinctions of this world compared with a faithful fellowship in the "General Assembly and Church of the First Born, whose names are written in heaven."

But, however profitable and cheering it may be occasionally to call to mind our connection with God's people who have gone before, there is danger even here of falling into a dreamy, romantic ecclesiasticism, utterly barren of good result. And since we are not to be accepted before God in consequence of the good company we may chance to keep, it is time to recall our thoughts from the hallowed past to the earnest present,—from Judea to Germantown.

The field of Pastoral Aid operations in this parish is divided into ten Districts; nine of which, laying between Price and Sharpnack streets, are under charge of the main society; and the other district, between Sharpnack street and Grace Chapel, Mt. Airy, is placed under the auxiliary society called "The Grace Chapel Missionary Association" The object had in view is so very comprehensive that its attainment would be utterly hopeless without thorough and systematic effort, vitalized by the blessing of God. It is nothing less than:

1*st*. A respectful, judicious inquiry into the condition of every single family within our limits, where such inquiry seems to be desirable;

2*d*. Regular visitations in the spirit of Christ,—and that means a great deal,—to all who respond favorably to these applications; and

3*d*. The promotion of Christian habits of daily life, and of attendance at Church Services, Cottage Prayer Meetings and Sunday-schools.

Almost the whole of the visiting work is, at the present time, committed to 23 ladies of the Association. Some results granted to their efforts will be mentioned presently; but we must first try to have a correct idea of the greatness of the undertaking; for this gathering to-night would fail in its main purpose if we should not receive some enlarged views of the extent and necessities of this ample harvest field.

From a careful examination of our territory, made with special reference to this report, it is estimated that the number of families within our limits which should receive the regular attention of our Visitors is about 525. If these families be taken to average 4 persons each, here are 2,100 souls among whom 23 visitors, less than 1 to 90, have undertaken to do what christian love may, in the instruction of the inquiring, the relief of the needy, and the encouragement of the weak and desolate. Gratifying as is the success hitherto granted, it is obvious that this number of visitors is entirely too small to accomplish properly all that is attempted. It does not seem proper to attempt less, because scattered all through these districts are our own church attendants who, we ought to feel, must be visited at any rate; and the spirit of the gospel is opposed to making selections where all are its subjects. There is but one remedy, consistent with duty, for the defect to which we refer; and that is, an increase of prayer, of zeal and of numerical force.

The Saviour has taught us to compare these labors with those of the husbandman. We can therefore easily gather His divine will in this case by following out His own comparison. What

would a sensible farmer do if he found himself short of hands in harvest time? Verily he would not say: "We will cut this wheat in the fifty acre field and let those hundred acres rot;" but he would send out and seek all the unemployed help in the neighborhood. So, in the name of the Master, the Pastoral Aid Association issues this evening its advertisement of MORE HANDS WANTED: and "pray ye to the Lord of the Harvest that He would send laborers into His harvest."

But, though there are deficiencies of this kind to be regretted, no spirit of lamentation shall mark our words to-night; for He who is more ready to bestow His blessings than we are to seek them, has wrought very encouraging results from very feeble efforts. Let us, then, rather dwell on God's strength than on our weakness.

In selecting from the Visitors' reports a few instances of this divine favor, it is by no means intended to measure by these or by any number of visible results the real amount of success granted. That is God's secret, and hangs not at all upon appearances.* We are glad that our Visitors generally recognize this, and do not falter because they are often made to find their only encouragement in the promises of their Lord. But, now and then, when it suits His purpose, their faith is refreshed by sight; as in the following case, in which they were enabled to sum up manifest mercies.

"When we look back upon the weeks past," reads one report, "in which we have gone in and out amongst the precious souls of our district, we can thank God and rejoice. Seven persons have been received into our church communion, and are to-day rejoicing in the Lord. We kneel now, time and again, in prayer

*Hopes formed upon appearances are in no case placed above the possibility of disappointment. Our object being to study every phase of our business, we have placed on record the Visitors' current experience, and not a history of assured results.

with those who, not a year since, refused to pray. Of such and such an one now we can say: 'Behold he prayeth!' and we know that angels joy with us over sinners repenting and walking humbly with their God."

Another report says: * * "Several cases of interest have come before us: one of a woman who, though quite advanced in life, has not, since her girlhood, attended church. She was earnestly solicited to come to our meetings, but her reply was: 'She had no doubt that religion was a good thing, but she had done without it.' After endeavoring to point her to Jesus, the Visitor left. What was her astonishment on the same afternoon to find her at the Cottage Reading, and to hear her at its close express great pleasure. Two others who, one year ago, were apparently entirely indifferent to their eternal welfare, are now, we trust, earnestly seeking salvation. One family whom we found in great distress, have aroused our warmest sympathies. Rather than make their wants known, they had suffered greatly. A few of their neighbors, having found out the extent of their poverty, aided them and made known to us their condition. We visited them and were convinced of their sincerity. They have since been supplied with work and are now in a fair way to make a living" * *

The report to be next quoted, makes one statement which we desire to preface.

Many persons at the outset of this work feared that our solicitude to go from house to house, might be misconstrued by members of other churches who should thus be visited. But, except in a very few cases, this hesitation is proved to be groundless. The general language of the Visitors is to the effect that their fellow Christians bid them God speed! The report in question, is from a district where every single house has been visited. It says:

"We have, in every instance, been warmly invited and indeed urged to repeat our visits; and the frequent tear and earnest attention in listening to the word of God, convince us that the work is indeed a blessed one." The same report continues:

"Many cases of a deeply interesting spiritual character are receiving our attention, which, we hope and pray and cannot doubt, will bring forth precious fruit in due season. Four persons who have not been in the habit of attending any place of worship appear to feel drawn to our church. One, through much difficulty with a wretched husband, and surroundings of utter poverty, has experienced comfort in attending the evening services."

None but they who witness the expressions of confidence and affection of those benefitted by christian sympathy can know how heartfelt they are. A poor consumptive, attended in his last illness by one of our visitors was in the habit of regarding her faithful ministrations as, under God, his great cheer through the dark valley.

Here is an account,—not the only one that might be given,—of recovery from habits of intoxication. Obvious reasons compel us here, as in some other cases, to withhold many particulars which would add to the interest of the recital.

A poor man, fond of the glass, who for a long time had avoided the visitor, was induced to attend one of the Cottage Meetings. The result, by God's blessing, was a marked change in all his habits; at home, abroad and in the workshop. In the company of the upright, whom he before shunned, he attended church,—a place in which he had not set foot for many years. How great the change! "His conversation and his hopes appear now to be fixed on divine things. His children, even the youngest, are to come to the Sabbath-school." * * "Who can tell," exclaims the visitor, "the shower of blessings to descend from the little cloud that burst upon us at that Cottage Reading

where two or three gathered together, with Jesus in their midst!"

We leave this storm-tossed brother, struggling in temptation's waves for more than life, with a prayer that by God's grace, and a Christian's helping hand, his feet may soon stand firmly on the Rock; and we turn now to the pleasing contrast of a saintly couple, no longer in such strife but far out on the borders of the sea of life, with a hidden peace too deep to be disturbed by its few remaining waves.

"In our visits to this humble, pious, old couple, one of whom has lost his sight, we deem it a blessed privilege to be permitted to minister, even in a small degree, to their spiritual wants; and to serve for the time as eyes to the blind. They are very poor, but their privations are forgotten in view of their many spiritual blessings. Our visits are acknowledged with tears of gratitude, and an earnest entreaty for frequent remembrance at the throne of grace."

Here, suspending these narrations, it is proper to remark that most of the gratifying work of our committees is not illustrated by striking incidents; just as there are many engaging books not set off with pictures. A faithful visitor shows a just appreciation of this when she writes: "The attempted cultivation of this part of the field has been deeply interesting to those engaged, although there has been little that was fitted to attract general attention."

A certain writer on Christian Activity has sought to temper our natural elation over startling results by reference to an interview between the Saviour and his first missionaries, as found in the 10th Chapter of St. Luke. "The seventy returned again with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name!' And He said unto them * * 'In this rejoice not,—that the spirits are subject unto you,—but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.'"

Not the least important of the effects observed to follow all sincere works of love is the blessing reflected upon those seriously engaged in them. If any christians here are sighing for more joy and freedom in their experience, they may find food for profitable reflection in the following extracts from Visitors' records:

"When first we entered upon our labors we were much discouraged, and realized but little the presence of our covenant-keeping God. But notwithstanding the weakness of our faith, and the feebleness of our desires, He did not forsake us. And we now feel unable to express the gratitude which fills our hearts for what He has done."

Another says: "I never pass an hour amongst my humble friends that I do not receive some encouragement that sends me on my way rejoicing, strong in the Lord."

And yet another remarks: "I will not say that I have done good in this work, but one thing I can say: that the work has done good to me." These are common testimonies.

A summary of the visible results which God has made to flow from this organization, in the year now closed, shows that more than 1500 Christian visits have been made,* 200 Cottage Readings and Prayer Meetings held, and some thousands of pages of religious matter distributed. A large number of adults and children have been induced to attend Church and Sunday-school. Reference must also be made to several societies which have been established by visitors, and are valued as important auxiliaries in this work. One of these, designed for the mental and moral improvement of its members, numbers about 40 men and women. Another, to promote the cause of "Total Abstinence"

* The Society takes pleasure in acknowledging the kindness of the physicians of Germantown, who have added to their own charitable labors by generously responding to every application for professional assistance.

embraces a goodly number. To both of these societies excellent fruit has been granted. A third, is a Sewing or Industrial School, meeting every Saturday afternoon in the Centre Mission Chapel. Here as many as 40 children are taught, in classes according to their ability; beginning with those whose first little lesson is to make a knot and thread a needle. An opportunity is hereby furnished to reach many who do not attend our Sunday-schools.

Each of these instrumentalities, improved with zeal and prayer, must contribute to a general influence for good. Of those who in the past year have brought their first "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving" to this table of the Lord, our pastor can tell us how many owe their serious resolves to God's blessing upon the counsel and sympathy of the ladies of the Aid Association.

But, as before intimated, while the evidences of good result are brought to notice to-night, it must be borne in mind that we do not upon such facts found our gratitude, though we are grateful for them; nor upon such do we found our encouragement, though we are encouraged by them. But our thanks and our trust are independent of these manifestations, and given alone to Him who has engaged that, whether we see the result with these eyes or not, "His word shall not return unto Him void;" and, again, that "they who sow plenteously shall also reap plenteously."

Has any earnest visitor been inquiring, with needless anxiety, "Where is the proof of my ministry?" "Where is the sheaf of my rejoicing?" let such thoughts encourage her. The seeds of last summer will not germinate till the next. That careless person who chilled you with her blank indifference; and that other, in whose home physical and spiritual defilement struggled for prominence; aye, and the rough man who, the other day, turned from your Christian counsel with a senseless leer, may

give you yet a different reception; and, while the dazzle of heaven is fresh in your eyes, rise up, stainless and glorified, and call you blessed. "With God all things are possible." "Fear not: only believe!"

If an interest be excited to-night in any who have hitherto been strangers to this organization, we invite them to an intimate acquaintance with it. We invite them to become active in this work of love. To Christians, Pastoral Aid Associations appeal as the best known mode of carrying out the Saviour's command to go into the highways and byways and seek out the desolate and the forgotten, and bid them to the Gospel Feast. To Philanthropists, these societies commend themselves as among the most complete and rational means yet devised for the relief of the suffering; because they exert, at all seasons of the year, an influence calculated to remove the causes of suffering, by promoting industry and purity of life. Their work, primarily, is to benefit the souls of men; because this is the surest way to elevate both in this world and the next. But, if emergency demand, they do not forget their bodies. An intimate and constant knowledge of those who are the subjects of their attention enables them to act intelligently and efficiently,—much more so than is possible with relief societies as usually conducted. Laying aside all spiritual view, we honestly believe that benevolence could make no better disposition of its gifts than by casting them into the treasuries of well appointed Pastoral Aid Associations. The time will come, we hope soon, when these will be so multiplied that a division of territory and harmony of action will secure a much greater thoroughness in this work. We occupy this ground at present but we do not aspire to be masters of it. We want all the judicious help we can get.

We want help, under the power of God, to meet with far more efficiency the spirit of sin in our midst. Among its consequences, one brood of evils, in particular, stand across our path in

almost every street. And so, too, they stand in our subject to-night. Like the horrid lions in Pilgrim's Progress they will not let us go on without noticing them. But, unlike their prototypes, they are not chained, for of all the enemies to purity and peace these are the most openly destructive.

There are, perhaps, twenty-five houses in all our districts known as undisguised liquor shops. But, probably, at twice that number of places intoxicating drink can be procured,—procured on Sunday, procured by minors; and a worthy magistrate assures us that this illegality is practically almost without remedy. The present law requires for the offender's conviction a class of evidence which is generally so difficult to obtain that even in capital cases justice does not demand it. Yes, a man may be hung on circumstantial evidence, but a tavern keeper, for his misdeeds, cannot be fined except upon the testimony of an eye witness. Such is the law; and since it is the law we must abide by it; but we pray that God will speedily open the eyes of the people to this outrageous evil.

Not long since, a worthy woman of Germantown followed her husband, on a Sunday, to an adjoining tavern, and prevailed on its proprietor to refuse him drink. The poor man shortly afterward went to one or two other places in the neighborhood and satisfied his craving. In the afternoon he staggered home; but from his own door step, and the presence of his wife and children, he was taken through a scoffing mob to the lockup. He was not an habitual drunkard. It was the family's first terrible humiliation; and,—will it be believed?—the heartless wretch next door, angry because he had lost the sale of ten cents' worth of misery, came to the wife, in her fresh agony and tears, and insolently exulted over her husband's downfall!

While waiting for a day of more hopeful opposition to this curse, we ask a simple question of the male members of this Society, without pretending to offer any solution of it: What can we do now in this matter?

Children plead eloquently, and as we turn in sadness from this subject, we almost hear in our ears the appeal of one of our little Mt. Airy boys against a drunken and passionate parent: "Don't you think God might make mother stop whipping me? I sometimes pray to God that He would make her stop whipping me so hard." Dear little lamb, God judge between thee and society, and redress thy wrongs!

These references produce the train of reflection with which we would desire to close. Let us hear the sum of the whole matter. While there is much in the past to cheer this Association, it must not for one moment be thought that it has entered upon any child's play. The Giant whom it defies has his hosts on every side, and none but the God of David can give success to the paltry sling and stones wherewith it goes to meet him.

And now a profound sense of unworthiness to stand before you as an exhorter to more faithfulness, will compel the speaker, in the few words that remain, to assume that he has left this position and taken his place among his fellow members as a listener. It is, then, no longer he addressing you, but the subject addressing itself to you and to him.

The record of the Pastoral Aid Association of Christ Church for the year 1861 is now sealed up, unalterably sealed against the great day of accounts. It is in part cheering: God be praised for its cheer! It is in part defective: God forgive us its defects! But such as it is, it must remain. The uncorrecting past says, like Pilate, "What I have written, I have written." Beside the consciousness of deficiencies, we have had to feel the hard lesson of change Faithful ones have gone from us whose places will not soon be filled. But neither thought of failings nor thought of separations must be allowed to discourage. The Fountain of healing still flows, and surely they who have undertaken to lead others thither, should know the road themselves.

Standing here to-night, as a Society, between two years, let these serious reflections upon the departure of one, be tempered

by hopeful preparation for the approach of the other. Every circumstance about us is a call to earnestness. Around is the din and clang of a world in arms, to fight the battles of the flesh; and shall the Sword of the Spirit be laid idly by? Sin's great rebellion against the God of the universe was never waged so fiercely as now. How, then, can we call ourselves "soldiers of Christ," if we wilfully sleep in this day of battle? O, if these universal commotions, whose waves are even now heaving at our feet, be indeed,—as many believe,—the last throes of an expiring world, "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God!"

And now, thanking our Lord Jesus Christ for the faithful ministrations of His word, under and with which it has been the privilege of this Society to work, and praying for blessings upon pastor and people, let us aim anew to "take unto ourselves the whole armor of God, that we may be able to withstand in this evil day and, having done all, *to stand!*"

W. C. Taylor, *Vice Pres.*

TREASURER'S REPORT.

Receipts.		Expenditures.	
From Active Members,	$14 50	Printing,	$10 50
" Contributing Members,	69 00	Tracts, Books, &c.,	15 93
Donations,	20 50	Groceries by order of Relief Committee,	73 70
Extra Assesments,	8 25	Coal,	11 25
		Balance,	87
	$112 25		$112 25

One member of the Association collected and disbursed, (from private donations,) $90 00, making with the above a total expenditure of $201 38.

Donations.—25 Bibles; 50 Testaments and 5,000 pages tracts.

Also, 10 bushels potatoes and 40 bushels turnips.

J. H. Harrisson,
Treasurer.

December 31, 1861.